

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION BERLIN
USMISSION NATO
AMCONSUL MUNCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 5918

E.O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, RO
SUBJECT: JIU VALLEY COAL MINERS WORK STOPPAGE

REF: BUCHAREST 5847

1. SUMMARY. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE NOW CONFIRMED TO US THAT A WORK STOPPAGE DID TAKE PLACE LAST WEEK AMONG JUI VALLEY COAL MINERS (REFTTEL). PRINCIPAL CAUSE WAS DISSATISFACTION OVER NEW PENSION LAW. GOR NOW SEEMS TO BE BACK-PEDLING ON SOME OF THE LAW'S MORE ONEROUS PROVISIONS, AS WELL AS GIVING UNWANTED MEDIA ATTENTION TO MINERS. END SUMMARY.

2. OFFICIAL OF ROMANIAN TV WHO ACCOMPANIED CEAUSESCU ON AUGUST 3 VISIT TO AREA TOLD IO THAT PLANNED LIVE COVERAGE OF CEAUSESCU SPEECH WAS IMPOSSIBLE SINCE HE
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WAS "VERY BADLY RECEIVED" WITH CROWD SHOUTING AND WAVING THEIR FISTS AT HIM. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, COMMENTS WERE HEARD THAT LIFE HAD BEEN BETTER UNDER CAPITALISM AND THAT FORMER LEADER GHEORGHIU-DEJ HAD NEVER MADE SUCH "BLUNDERS" IN DEALING WITH WORKERS IN HEAVY INDUSTRY. IN SEGMENTS OF SPEECH NOT REPORTED IN PRESS, CEAUSESCU ALLEGEDLY ARGUED THAT MISUNDERSTANDINGS

AND BAD FEELINGS WERE RESULT OF FAILURE OF LOCAL OFFICIALS TO UNDERSTAND AND EXPLAIN NEW PENSION LAW PROPERLY. AS SOURCE UNDERSTOOD IT, CEAUSESCU IMPLIED THERE WOULD BE SOME CHANGES IN APPLICATION OF THE LAW.

3. SECOND SOURCE CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF THAT PENSION LAW WAS ROOT CAUSE OF WORK STOPPAGE. ONE AGGRAVATING FACTOR, HE SAID, WAS INCLUSION OF "BALLERINAS" IN SAME WORK CATEGORY AS COAL MINERS FOR PENSION PURPOSES. MINERS ALLEGEDLY REFUSED EVEN TO DISCUSS SETTLEMENT UNTIL CEAUSESCU HAD TALKED WITH THEM PERSONALLY. THIS SOURCE FURTHER STATED, HOWEVER, THAT WORK STOPPAGE CONTINUED UNTIL EVENING AUGUST 6 WHEN UNSPECIFIED AGREEMENT WAS HAMMERED OUT BETWEEN MINERS AND GOVERNMENT TEAM LED BY MIN. LABOR PANA AND MIN. MINES BABALAU.

4. EVEN SINCE CEAUSESCU'S AUGUST 3 VISIT TO AREA, MEDIA HAVE DEVOTED INTENSIVE COVERAGE TO EXPLAINING BENEFITS OF NEW WAGE INCREASES AND PENSION SYSTEM, IN CONTEXT OF PARTY'S CONCERN WITH RAISING LIVING STANDARDS OF WORKING PEOPLE. AUGUST 7 SUNDAY SCINTEIA DEVOTES ONE HALF FRONT PAGE TO CELEBRATION ON "MINERS DAY", AND EVENT WHICH RATED ONLY A BRIEF ARTICLE ON SIMILAR OCCASION LAST YEAR. ARTICLE INCIDENTLY CONFIRMS PAPA AND BABALU'S PRESENCE IN PETROSANI PREVIOUS DAY FOR "FESTIVE MEETING" WITH THE MINERS. OTHER HALF OF FRONT PAGE CONTAINS LENGTHY "EXPLANATION" OF PENSION LAW.

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5. COMMENT: WE CANNOT CONFIRM THAT WORK STOPPAGE LASTED UNTIL SATURDAY, THEREBY DIRECTLY DEFYING CEAUSESCU'S CALL TO RETURN TO WORK. AT ANY EVENT, ALL SOURCES AGREE THAT MINERS ARE NOW BACK TO WORK. AS RESULT OF THIS AFFAIR, WE ANTICIPATE PERSONNEL CHANGES AMONG LOCAL PARTY LEADERS IN THE AREA AND GRADUAL PIECE-MEAL REVISION OF PENSION LAW, BOTH PROBABLY AFTER THE DUST SETTLES SOMEWHAT MORE.

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